

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 1ABOSTON GLOBE
8 May 1986

CIA warning to paper seen as 1st shot in media battle

By Fred Kaplan
Globe Staff

WASHINGTON - A major battle may be brewing between the Reagan administration and the news media over how much the press can publish about matters of high national security.

The opening shots were fired yesterday, when the Washington Post reported that the CIA director, William Casey, had warned Benjamin C. Bradlee, executive editor, that the Post could face criminal prosecution if it printed a news story it was planning to run about US intelligence-gathering operations.

Casey also reportedly told Bradlee he also knew of "five absolutely cold violations" - committed by The New York Times, Washington Times, Time and Newsweek, as well as the Post - of laws prohibiting publication of classified information concerning intelligence.

The New York Times yesterday reported the same conversation between Casey and Bradlee, and added that the as-yet-unpublished Post story involved classified documents that were sold to the Russians by a former communications specialist at the super-secret National Security Agency. The specialist, Ronald W. Pelton, is awaiting trial for espionage.

Robert Kaiser, national editor at the Post, declined comment on whether the Times story was correct. Rumors floating around media circles yesterday were that the Post had obtained the National Security Agency's internal report on how badly Pelton's leaks harmed US intelligence capabilities.

Pelton is believed to have provided the Kremlin with information about how much US intelligence knows about Soviet nuclear-missile submarines and per-

haps about Soviet communications with those subs. This would involve the security agency's code-breaking procedures - among the most secretive activities in all of government.

Analysts close to intelligence consultants say Pelton may also have told the Soviets where the security agency has stationed covert "signal-intelligence" sites, designed to intercept electronic and radio signals inside the USSR. The security agency has many such sites all over the world, most of which are well known to Soviet intelligence agencies. However, it evidently has some 'whose existence are believed to have been kept secret - until Pelton allegedly sold the information.

Pelton allegedly sold the information to the Soviets after leaving the National Security Agency. He was deeply in debt and has admitted to having been a drug user.

Pelton's alleged leaks were considered a damaging blow to a major US security project. However, it is debatable whether further harm would come from a newspaper's publishing now the substance of his leak. Andrew Cockburn, author of a forthcoming book about the history of US intelligence, said yesterday, "The Sovi-

ets already have the information. So what if the American public gets it as well?" The CIA and the security agency would not comment.

Reports of Casey's warnings to Bradlee indicate the possibility of a coming crackdown on the press. For example, Casey said the Post might also be under investigation, along with Newsweek, for reporting on US intercepts of messages between Libya and East Berlin. However, those news reports were clearly based on organized leaks from Reagan officials who wanted to prove that the administration had proof of Libyan involvement in the bombing of a West Berlin disco that killed a US serviceman. It was this bombing that sparked the US air raid over Libya days later.

In a statement released yesterday, Newsweek said, "We would suggest that the problem lies with administration officials who have been feeding sensitive information to the press for political purposes."

Neither Newsweek nor any of the other publications mentioned by Casey have been notified by the government of any investigations or possibilities of prosecution under intelligence statutes.